



**Testimony of Lynn Reichart, Senior Director Early Care and Education  
Child & Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut**

***In support of***

**SB487- AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE INFANT AND TODDLER EARLY CARE  
AND FAMILY SUPPORT INITIATIVE.**

***Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee Public Hearing, March 30, 2022***

Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, Senator Formica, Representative Cheeseman and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of SB487- An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative.

My name is Lynn Reichart and I am the Senior Director Early Care and Education for the Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut. I am writing today to urge you to support this expansion of funding for infant and toddler early care.

Child and Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut has been providing childcare services to the New London and Groton areas since 1991. The New London Day Nursery (NLDN) opened in 1991 and the Groton-Mystic Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) opened in 1999. Our childcare programs serve children ages 6 weeks to 5 years of age living in New London, Groton and surrounding towns.

The first three years of life are critical to children's brain development. Early care and education provides infants and toddlers with nurturing care and relationships, important early learning experiences and the social/emotional skills to foster growth and development throughout their youth. These early learning opportunities are greatly impacted by the availability of quality early childhood programs and the cost of these programs for families.

The majority of the families we serve at our New London Day Nursery and the Groton-Mystic Early Childhood Development Center live at or below the federal poverty level. This means many of the children we serve have experienced homelessness, food insecurity, are single parented, are in foster care, are under grandparent guardianship and/or have experienced trauma or adverse events in their young lives.

The established state funded unit rate reimbursement to infant/toddler care is \$9,946 and the average cost of infant/toddler care in Southeastern CT is \$17,678. State funded programs have been receiving this same reimbursement since 2014. Salary alone has jumped 72% since 2014 while infant/toddler reimbursement has had 0% increase. Programs can simply not afford to provide infant/toddler care.

**Between our two programs, we are only able to serve a total of 20 infants and toddlers and currently have a waiting list of 109 children ages birth to three.** Over the last several years the demand for quality infant/toddler care has continued to increase while programs serving this 0-3 population have continued to decrease.

Without this investment in quality infant/toddler early childhood education, we are creating unintended consequences which lead to significant educational gaps (i.e. language delays & social/emotional processing) for children even before they enter kindergarten. Babies deserve a healthy start, a strong foundation and opportunities to reach their full potential in school and eventually the workforce.

Thank you for your consideration.

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